



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Tetanus

What Is <i>tetanus</i>?	Tetanus is an acute, often fatal, disease caused by the toxin produced by Clostridium tetani bacteria. The bacteria spores are naturally occurring worldwide. They are found in soil and in the intestines and feces of many animals.
What are the symptoms?	Tetanus is characterized by rigidity and by convulsive spasms of the skeletal muscles. The muscle stiffness usually involves the jaw, (lockjaw), and neck and then becomes more generalized throughout the body.
How is <i>tetanus</i> treated?	Antibiotic treatments are not effective for treating tetanus. All wounds should be thoroughly cleaned, and any dead tissue or foreign objects removed. If spasms are occurring, supportive therapy in the form of intravenous fluids and open airways is very important. Tetanus immune globulin, as a shot or as in IV, can help.
How do people catch this disease?	The C. tetani usually enter the body through a wound, even a very minor one. It cannot be spread from person to person.
What can be done to stop the spread of this disease?	The vaccination against tetanus (part of the DtaP vaccination) is very effective. It is a requirement for children in order to attend daycare and school in South Carolina. A booster shot should be given every 10 years.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

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